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AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CENTRALITY OF RELATIONSHIPS
IN SOME ASPECTS OF THE AREAS OF SIN, GUILT,
FORGIVENESS AND FAITH

A Thesis
Presented to
the Dean and Faculty
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by
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: RELATIONSHIPS--

THE DETERMINERS OF LIFE

I. THE FRAMEWORK

In this introductory chapter we will first examine the meaning and application of the word "relationship" and then explore the ways in which we are able to speak of relationships "determining" life. We will then make preliminary statements about our following chapters and attempt to show how the areas under study contribute to and develop from an understanding of the centrality of relationship. In this way we hope to establish a framework within the bounds of which we may deal with our material.

II. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Relationships

Implies a strong self. When we speak of relationship, we are not substituting a mass mentality for personal responsibility. On the contrary, we posit that the true ability to relate is a sophisticated form of interaction that has as its prerequisite a development of each participant to the extent that he is free and responsible.

Such development is continuous and dynamic and depends on previous experience, which itself will have been relational in nature. We go from strength to strength. Relationship is an intensely personal experience, not a substitute for it. We cannot set up qualifications for the person to meet before he is ready for a relationship, because the two are mutually interdependent realities; and in this chapter we will discuss how they foster each other: as relationships grow, so does the person.

This self, this person-who-relates, is never called upon to abnegate personal integrity. He enters relationships with his whole self, and he will always be unique in his reactions. No one man will follow any inexorable law of cause and effect or follow generally predictable and static reactions. On the other hand, persons share many feelings and modes of reaction and expression which can be anticipated and clarified when we understand their origin, meaning and purpose. Such an understanding in no way limits personal freedom or creativity but rather aids in developing it. Integrity might be called a certain intra-personal unity, a relationship within the self to all its potential modes of expression.

Thus, when we proceed to speak of relationships in their positive sense, we will be implying at least the

possibility that each partner has these inner resources and that he will intend, to the best of his ability, to use them. That is, persons in relationship are "selves in a context", so to speak. That context, we will go on to consider, can be another way of speaking of life itself. "The person is a potential, a current of life which surges up continually, and which manifests itself in a fresh light at every new blossoming forth of life. At the creative moment of dialogue with God or with another person, I in fact experience a double certainty: that of 'discovering' myself, and also that of 'changing'."1

Our relationship is primarily to God. We affirm that God has created us, and thus our central relationship is with Him. We must be sure to realize, however, that this relationship is qualitatively different from any other we will know. God's love is not simply more love than that of a person; it is divine love, expressed divinely. That is to say, He is Creator and we are creatures, created. This has ramifications in every aspect of life we will examine. There is a true distinction between Creator and creature that can only be seen within a theological framework. Probably the most concise way of stating this is to speak of God's independence as compared to our dependence upon Him. We will draw this out later, because it is

both more complex than might appear, and also it is important to our development.

God is willing to have relationship with us. William Temple expresses it this way: God, he says, did not have to create man; but without man, God would not be who He uniquely is! And who He is we see in large part by this very willingness to have us.

There is a general reconciling activity of God in the world that all men may, potentially, accept. But He is not limited to generalities. When we affirm that He is Creator we are not summarizing Him in this word--indeed, any assertion of who He is will fall short. But the one addition most helpful at this point is the realization that He is personal. This is why we dare think of relationship with Him--never as a peer, but still as a willing person. God's personhood is a mystery, and it is never to be equated with personhood as we know it; but nevertheless it is part of what He has revealed to us of Himself.

And we may affirm this because His reconciling activity is more than just the general one we noted above. To His people Israel He gave commandments and covenants, lining out the mutual responsibilities of each party; and when from man's angle this was seen as insufficient, He culminated His revelation by sending His son. Jesus--Emmanuel--God with us. That is, God takes the necessity of relationship so

seriously that He sent His son to share the life of men most literally. We misinterpret God's purpose, or rather fail to see it altogether, when we look at Jesus as an "example" or simply a "brother". The Incarnation is God's making concrete the possibility for man to enter relationship with Him in terms man can grasp. Finally, God's active part in relationship is seen in the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of men. We will consider this later as well.

God does His utmost to help us, and yet we founder. Why? "Man exists...in God, his fundamental relation is to God...But though God's relation to man is not qualified by man's acceptance or rejection of his presence, man's relation to God is evidently so qualified. I cannot think about God's relation to man in the abstract."² God will continue to show His steadfast love in spite of us; but it does us no good if we do not accept it, that is, enter the offered relationship. So the problem does not hinge on God's willingness, but on ours. The problem exists on our side of the relationship, but the solution cannot come exclusively from our side. This is the problem we will be examining. It is, incidentally, further complicated by the fact that we need God's help in order to be willing to seek Him.

Relationship expressed interpersonally. This section is closely tied to what we have expressed above regarding God. If He is indeed Creator, then we and all others are the created, part of God's creation. As the Genesis myth indicates so graphically, God knew what sort of a being He had created and what his needs would be. So, "the Lord God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone'" (Gen. 2:18) and the result was another human being. In this story we have the realization that there is purpose inherent in the creation, and in it is expressed God's concern and love for us and what we are meant to be. Our lives are like the center of the letter L, reaching from the tiny dot of our own existence vertically towards God and horizontally (figures of speech, of course) towards our fellow men. Lacking either direction, we would no longer be that which we were meant to be. "We love, because He first loved us. If any one says, 'I love God' and hates his brother, he is a liar..." (I John 4:9,10) There is no escaping the implications of this for our lives: "when God created man he eo facto created an order or structure of persons in relationship with Him and with one another."³

Thus we see how intertwined these two meanings of relationship are. Interpersonal relationship can only be full, we will posit, in conjunction with relationship to

God. The latter is a sacrament of the former, in this sense: it cannot exist in its fullness alone, as a matter of fact it derives its significance from the presence of the first. Perhaps the best modern statement of this is found in the work of Martin Buber. He finds the world of relation available in three spheres: with nature, man and God. "In every sphere in its own way, through each process of becoming that is present to us we look out toward the fringe of the eternal Thou; in each we are aware of a breath from the eternal Thou; in each Thou we address the eternal Thou."⁴ Buber is not speaking of the feelings alone which are isolate and changeable because they are individual--they serve but they do not determine. Feelings are but a part of what he calls "living mutual relations, first with the Centre, then growing to include others after the first is established. Contact with the Thou is our eternal life, and the aim of relation is relation's own being."⁵ Relation with man is what he calls a "simile" of the relation with God: they are not identical, else he would be a pantheist, but one nurtures the other and thus they are closely connected.

The connotation of responsibility. Our final point under our definition of relationships must be a quick look at what responsibility means in this context. For

relationships must be responsible in the sense in which we speak of them. An irresponsible relationship is sinful and thus not a relationship at all--there may be dialogue, but it is reaction and not true response.⁶ Relationship is a positive term and implies, to borrow from H. Richard Niebuhr, response to interpreted action upon us, made in anticipation of a reply.⁷ Niebuhr asks that "we consider our life of response to action upon us with this question in mind, 'To whom or what am I responsible and in what community of interaction am I myself?'"⁸ This question cannot be answered by ourselves alone, for that would be "bootstrap responsibility". But it is not abstract or idealistic either: we need God's help, but He does not work in a vacuum.

The Determiners of Life

Life is more than biological. Because we say that relationships are the determiners of life, we need to look at this second clause as well. Life here means distinctively human life as opposed to mere vitalism. And even more deeply, life means that of which we are capable, that which we are meant to be. This is not idealism, either, or a humanistic notion of man's perfectibility. What it does take seriously is the idea of the

imago dei. God has a purpose for us, and we seek obedience to His purpose in the most loving and inclusive way possible which, we posit, we can best express through relationships.

There is another way to look at purpose, too. "What we term education, conscious and willed, means a selection by man of the effective world. The relation in education is lifted out of the purposelessly streaming education by all things, and is marked off by purpose."⁹ All of life has meaning. But this is not to say that a random element of experience is helpful to any person at any time. Often we are not ready to learn or are not capable of it, too much is given at one time for us to absorb, or we might even hear and deliberately reject something which at another time could be accepted. In so many cases, however, another person could make the difference for us, were he to be brought into our confidence, or were he to realize the situation and carefully enter it. "To be responsible", Tournier affirms, "is to have to reply."¹⁰ "We become fully conscious only of what we are able to express to somebody else."¹¹ We call this the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, when men enter dialogue at just the right time. "The power of the personal is the power to hear and to help one another. Love is the power that enables people

to be really present to ~~ane~~ another."¹² And in this sense we might agree with Oldham that "the spirit is the word, the act of communication."¹³ This responsibility is felt by both parties in the dialogue.¹⁴ We must avoid a humanism here--goodness is of God, not of man--we are instruments of His, and we draw our strength in our dealings with one another from our primary loyalty to Him. And the dialogue is a mutual process. We do not help others in order to be helped ourselves; but this surely occurs, else the relationship has not been truly personal. As we learn to accept one another more fully, to be responsible for one another, we are doing for others what we would have God do unto us. "Responsibility as an act of love means living our own lives in ways which will help others to live theirs."¹⁵ And as we do this our own lives will be transformed.

Life is not the same for all. Again we must remind ourselves that we are not speaking of a mass reality, but of selves in the context of relationship. This latter determines life, indeed, but this means different things to each person who experiences it. We all have different internal capacities and different external functions; and these are to be respected and used as creatively as we may. This point is, then, almost identical to what we

said above concerning relationships: as they posit a strong self with unique abilities, so will "life" exhibit as many interpretations as there are persons to experience it.

Universal meaning of "life". While we acknowledge firmly the ability of each man to respond personally, we must keep in mind the arena in which this happens--that of social solidarity--that which Niebuhr calls a "context of a continuing community of agents."¹⁶ We will interpret differently, but the stuff of life is common to all men. As Temple notes throughout his writing, whatever else a man may be, alone he cannot be moral--for the very word requires interaction within its definition. "The personal relation of persons is constitutive of personal existence: there can be no man unless there are two men in communication."¹⁷ When we push the point, it becomes almost a tautology.

Adler as an Example

We find the same note in the work of Alfred Adler. "Individual Psychology accepts the viewpoint of the complete unity and self-consistency of the individual whom it regards as socially embedded. We refuse to recognize and examine

an isolated human being."¹⁸ Further, "all the main problems of life are problems of human cooperation."¹⁹ Even stronger than this is his statement, "Reality, that is society, the community."²⁰ We accept these statements in perspective: that is, they must never deify the community or lessen the inherent value of the person. Adler, dealing mainly with the mentally disturbed, would tend to insist that the root of their problem lay in withdrawal, exaggerated self-interest, a psychological solipcism. When we are out of touch with those around us we cannot be fully in touch with ourselves, as the language of neurosis and psychosis testifies so well. We can see now how Adler could not say, with Freud, that society presents only a collection of repressions and is a negative force on the expression of the individual. Adler sees meaning and purpose in communal life--indeed, it is the wellspring of life itself for him.

Having established our social embeddedness, Adler then proceeds to discuss social interest, "the innate aptitude through which the individual becomes responsive to reality."²¹ By innate Adler does not mean instinctual but rather potential, a given in human nature, which develops according to several factors in the life of the individual. The context must, of course, be a social one. And Adler further clarifies this social context not as

"objective", that is, available to another person with the same genes and experiences, but to the given one's personal understanding of and reaction to his situation. "It is more than a feeling", he notes, "it is an evaluative attitude toward life."²² This he calls empathy or identification²³, "to see with the eyes of another, to hear with the ears of another, to feel with the heart of another." We can easily see how much more theologically useful this may be than Freud's concept of self-interest as the prime motivating factor. Adler would not deny self-interest its place, as we will see; but he does offer social interest as the healthier alternative for an overall life view.

We listen to Adler not simply because he "fits" a Christian view of man better than Freud, but also because on the basis of psychological understanding itself he appears to have uncovered and corrected a basic defect in Freud's reasoning. As Adler's disciple Carl Furtmuller points out²⁴, Freud tended to regard ethics (societal norms) as a series of repressions or sublimations of the given person's libido. And we might well ask him then where the root of ethics lies. As Furtmuller puts it, "sublimation could only strengthen existing tendencies but not create them...Adler traced the forces behind repression after Freud had discovered its effects." For us as Christians, who

would not see ethical values as random effects of man's need to repress the desires of others, Adler's understanding is consonant with the view that man's life has positive meaning and is bound up with others in a creative and useful fashion.

The Major Alternatives: Individualism and Exploitation

To say these things we must realize that we are thereby rejecting many of the tenets of traditional philosophy.²⁵ Let us first see what our point of view has to say to the individualist position.

To consider the human self as isolated and capable of pure reason and objective knowledge is to create a fiction, a situation in which the knower is removed from what he knows. This postulate is both theoretical and egocentric--the self can never stand outside the world to manipulate it by a lever. The self is a person, an agent. Further, we behave in reference to others, dynamically, affect and are affected in mutuality. Egocentricity is an abstraction, life is not. Thus MacMurray's thesis: "All meaningful knowledge is for the sake of action, and all meaningful action is for the sake of friendship." Hell is other people only to those who use, and feel themselves used, by others.

The opposite, then, of relation is exploitation. The Thou becomes It, and a man is victimized rather than free. Buber tells us that nothing need be seen only as an it--even inanimate objects can be related to. On the other hand, the very nature of the I-Thou relationship is, on earth, impermanent, and every Thou will in course of time become an it again. In the first sphere this is relatively harmless, but towards God it is sin and is reflected in dealings with men. Now this is not to say that all use is evil--far from it. "Without It man cannot live. But he who lives with It alone is not a man."²⁶ Reuel Howe sees this clearly: "the sin is not in living functionally but in living in that way without any expectation of personal encounter."²⁷ He goes on to show that the importance lies in which masters which. When things to be used are used properly, they actually aid creativity and foster mutuality. And a true person has the capacity to deal with things and emerge master. But people are never to be used. Further, all true relationships among men lead to God; and the closer a personal tie, the less it is "mine". Also, the less the possibility of using another, if he is truly a person to me. But a person will love a thing if he does not know the greater joy of loving another; and a person will cling to the love of another disproportionately if he does not

know the greater joy of the love of God. Seen from a God-centered angle, all things and experiences have a proper place; ignore God and chaos and anxiety will ensue. We strive to find satisfaction, and we are continually thwarted by reaching our goal and finding it void of satisfaction when it is solely our own we seek. "We need to be re-born as those who have turned their backs on an isolated self-sufficient existence and are finding their true life in mutual dependence."²⁸

III. HOW CONNECTED WITH FOLLOWING CHAPTERS

The Problem: Sin as Separation

We intend to use the word "sin" as what we will call a theological term with primary emphasis on its relational aspects. That is, our treatment will be concerned with man's relationship to God and how man has broken the relationship. As you will realize, this means leaving out many of the traditional methods of discussing sin that place their emphasis on legalistic or mark-missing aspects. Sin, here, is relationshiplessness.

Furthermore, sin is "objective"; and by that we mean that we are in a state of sin if our relationship to God is broken whether or not we perceive it, whether or not we deny it. These distinctions will become clearer when we look at their obverse sides below.

Guilt--The Experience of Separation

We are going to call guilt an existential reality, to help distinguish it (as long as is necessary) from what we mean by sin, the theological reality. By this we simply mean that guilt is an experienced phenomenon. And we will also call it "subjective": we feel it, we say "I am guilty". And we feel it in relation to others: "I am guilty interpersonally as well as intrapersonally." By subjective we most emphatically do not mean that guilt lacks reality: we use the term to underline its personal reality.²⁹

True guilt, like sin, is relationshiplessness (given the positive meaning of relationship posited above). Both of these chapters deal with the negative side of the overall framework, relationship. In their "purest" forms these two symbols, sin and guilt, will stand for an identical reality (that is, to affirm true guilt is to affirm sin), but we must work this out before we can offer it as a proposition.

Forgiveness--the Dynamics of Entered Relationship

This will be a complex chapter, as forgiveness is a promise, a process and finally a reality. We call it existential and subjective for again it is intensely experienced by the person involved. But in the process of seeking and finding forgiveness we are never alone, before

God or man. For being forgiven is in fact entering into relationship anew. It cannot become real until we acknowledge our dependence on another and turn to him. It is a dynamic and ongoing process, in which a person discovers himself and discovers that he is changing.

We also speak of forgiveness as theological and objective. That is, God offers His forgiveness unconditionally--it exists as a promise in spite of man. But since it requires relationship in order to be effective and operable, here we have the fusion of the existential and the theological, the objective and the subjective. In the first two states, sin and guilt, man chooses the alternative of going it himself; where with forgiveness he chooses relationship, that is, inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness. Thus we will speak of forgiveness as "existentially theological".

Faith (Realized Forgiveness)

It is very important here that we realize just how we are using the word faith.³⁰ Here, the meaning of faith is relational, not expressly doctrinal, exegetical or historical. We use it as the fullest expression of not-sin, as the other side of the relationship-coin on which sin is lack and faith is presence. The point we need to make here is that our use of faith is therefore not necessarily

purely Christian faith. That is, other systems show the same dynamics.³¹ We will be examining both Christian faith and alternative faiths that in their way have much to say to us as Christians. So while faith as we use it means fullness of relationship and is thus not a Christian prerogative, nevertheless my faith is Christian and for me relationship cannot be full until my primary relationship is to God through Jesus Christ. That is to say, my use of the word is in a Christian context though it would not necessarily have to be so, seen critically. As Niebuhr puts it, "the Christian life has its own style", but it is not "somehow discontinuous with other modes of human existence."³²

Thus this concluding chapter will see faith as both a state we are in (as sin was its opposite state), a state of relationship to God; and we will also see faith as a changing, developing, creative, moment-by-moment kind of life with all its possibilities open. So we will call this last term in our group of four the "theologically existential".

IV. SUMMARY

In this chapter we have discussed and clarified the term relationship. We have stated that relationships lead to life, they give life, they are life. A discussion

of any area of life needs to consider its relational aspects as fully as possible.

Using relationships as a framework, we have then introduced the concerns of the following chapters and looked at them in the light of the centrality of relationship. We have called sin theological, guilt existential, forgiveness existentially theological and faith theologically existential. The presence or absence of relationship is what gives these other terms their significance in this context.

V. FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER I

- ¹Paul Tournier (trans. Edwin Hudson), The Meaning of Persons (Harper and Row, 1957), p. 212.
- ²H. Richard Niebuhr, The Responsible Self (Harper and Row, 1963), p. 44.
- ³H.H. Farmer, The Servant of the Word (London: Nisbet & Co., 1942), p. 38.
- ⁴Martin Buber, I and Thou (N.Y.: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 6.
- ⁵Ibid., p. 63
- ⁶Here we anticipate our definition of sin. For now, let us accept the word as meaning that no real relationship is present.
- ⁷Niebuhr, op. cit., p. 64.
- ⁸Ibid., p. 68.
- ⁹Martin Buber (trans. Ronald Gregor Smith), Between Man and Man (N.Y.: The MacMillan Co., 1948), p. 89.
- ¹⁰Tournier, op. cit., p. 171.
- ¹¹Ibid., p. 22.
- ¹²Reuel Howe, The Creative Years (Greenwich: The Seabury Press, 1959), p. 21.
- ¹³J. H. Oldham, Real Life is Meeting (Greenwich: The Seabury Press, 1953), p. 17.
- ¹⁴It is beyond our scope here, but the new hermeneutical work has much to contribute to a study of the significance of communication.
- ¹⁵Reuel Howe, The Creative Years, p. 76.
- ¹⁶Niebuhr, op. cit., p. 65.
- ¹⁷John MacMurray, Persons in Relation (London: Faber & Faber Ltd., 1961), p. 12

- ¹⁸Heinz L. Ansbacher and Rowena R. Ansbacher (eds.), The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler (Harper Torchbooks, 1964, p. 126.
- ¹⁹Ibid., p. 131.
- ²⁰Ibid., p. 133. It is interesting that we find a parallel statement, "Reality is the lived relation", in Oldham, op. cit., p. 31.
- ²¹Ansbacher, op. cit., p. 133.
- ²²Ibid., p. 135. ²³Ibid., p. 136.
- ²⁴Ibid., p. 146, and includes the next quotation.
- ²⁵This paragraph is a reworking of John MacMurray, The Self as Agent (N. Y.: Harper, 1957), *passim*.
- ²⁶Buber, I and Thou, p. 34.
- ²⁷Howe, The Creative Years, p. 177.
- ²⁸Oldham, op. cit., p. 7.
- ²⁹We need a brief explanation here. Guilt is considered a theological term by many who would not use such a word in their systems; and sin is not an abstraction, thus it is existential in its way. These terms are handles, to help us distinguish, in a fairly arbitrary way, at least our method of looking at the problem.
- ³⁰For a careful and helpful clarification of the many meanings of faith, I refer you to D. Peter Burrows, The Relationship in Faith: a Functional Theology (unpub. senior thesis, Episcopal Theological School, Spring 1965), *passim*.
- ³¹Adler's Individual Psychology, for example, stresses the necessary and health-giving aspects of a life of "social solidarity": this too is a faith.
- ³²Niebuhr, op. cit., p. 45.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

I. BACKGROUND

This paper has had a long and flexible development, some of which should be noted as explanation and perhaps apologia for my method of approach. I was an English major in college and had only one year of introductory behavioral science, so my technical background in research is modest indeed. But the influence of a major in which human concerns and the communicating of them loom large was undoubtedly my first push in this direction. Seminary itself was an explicit choice to continue the search.

My first acknowledgment of actual direction, however, would be my summer in clinical pastoral training, where the problems of relationship are met head-on both in theory and in practice. I would say that there, the interpersonal relationships observed, entered into and evaluated, awakened me to the realization that I had much to learn and to do. The following year I took a course in social relations at Harvard University¹; and this year I am doing my field work in a state mental hospital², working with both adults and children. Certainly both of these experiences have contributed to my concern for relationships and

their evaluation.

And to these I would also add almost the entire range of my seminary curriculum and the persons it includes, with special thanks to my tutor for his earnest sensitivity to the wide area of relationship-concern.

Within the seminary and outside of course work I have found such motivating influences as Professor Gordon Allport's forum on religion and the behavioral sciences on the one hand; and on the other, informal, side there have been such movings-together among us all as the night we in twelve of our members went to Selma.

Most of all, I continue to experience the mystery of relationship with my husband, without whose strength and love I can only say I would not be who I am.

If all these gentle insistent voices may be seen as doing the work of the Holy Spirit, as I believe they can; then I only hope that I can respond by God's grace.

II. MATERIAL USED

In this section I limit myself to treating the actual sources of my research, the reading material. And it divides into three major groupings.

The first of these might be called the specifically theological-philosophical treatments, those which would be appropriate, broadly speaking, to a theology course

curriculum. Among these I would list William Temple, H. H. Farmer, John MacMurray, Martin Buber, Søren Kierkegaard, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, H. Richard Niebuhr and others found in the bibliography. Most of these, of course, deal with areas far broader than that under treatment here, and they have been utilized selectively.

Relatively small in number is the second group, that of the clearly oriented psychological writings. Here we find Ansbachers' editing of Adler's writing, the work of Carl Rogers and an unpublished paper by E.A. Tulis, B.D. and R.H. Phillips, M.D.

The greater part of my reading has been among those who attempt to relate the two fields in some measure. They divide into two rough categories, theoretical and practical.

The theoretical aspect is touched by such people as J.H. Oldham and Josef Goldbrunner, with Reuel Howe and David Roberts spanning the distinction. The practical writers are those who themselves are engaged in dealing with both areas, such as Seward Hiltner, Rollo May, James Emerson and most of all, Paul Tournier.

III. METHOD EMPLOYED

I have attempted to use my research as creatively as possible, by being moved by it but not bound to it. I have

taken as my thesis the following statement: an examination of the bearing of relationships on the problems of sin, guilt, forgiveness and faith seeks confirmation of the fact that the four latter realities depend upon relationship and in fact imply its presence or absence. What I have to say is largely in support of the following propositions: the factor of personal relationships is central to a study of God-man, man-God, man-man, man-men dealings; relationships, tacitly or overtly, are the sine qua non by which the Gospel speaks to man and man responds. "Sin" is a term describing a state of separation from God which manifests itself negatively in all interpersonal encounters; and "faith" is a term describing a state of relationship (fellowship) with God that enriches and gives meaning to all other interpersonal encounters. The dynamics of these alternative states can best be examined by focusing on the experience of guilt on the one hand and forgiveness on the other. While aware that "relationship" is not a broad enough term to cover every expression and ramification of these two traditional theological realities (sin and faith) and their dynamic counterparts (guilt and forgiveness), I propose to explore the possibility that, seen in the light of the centrality of relationship, these four terms are significantly interrelated.³

How I have gone about my task has been first to spend the majority of the first semester and much of this one reading and taking notes. My bibliography has grown by references in other books and suggestions from those with whom I have discussed, and the discussions themselves have helped me to clarify insights. Then I have put the reading aside (as far as is possible) and attempted in my own terms to select and evaluate the relevant areas within each specific concern and to try for a schema of some sort, flexible enough to allow for development but sturdy enough to incorporate new arrangements. It was in this stage that I discovered how helpful the terms "theological" and "existential" and their extensions could be in making the area workable. Then I have returned to my reading for corroboration, verification, refutation and the like of the points I hoped to make. I found that they tended to be far more supportive of my thesis than otherwise, although sections of MacMurray and Adler are good examples of issue-taking. I would account for this in two ways: first, I chose the reading for its relevance, and most writing that considers relationship at all takes it seriously; and second, I would lack humility indeed were I not to acknowledge the strong influence on me that the reading exerted! I came to the topic with a feeling for

its importance--I continue now to examine it with an immense awe for its centrality in almost any of the plentiful theological issues.

So this is a broad area (as broad as life itself, when seen from this angle), and each aspect could be a thesis in itself. I see my work here as a prolegomena to any future work I may do, both academic and "practical". It is the establishment of a point of view, a personal statement of faith, as it were. For this I am profoundly grateful to all those, far wiser than I, who have helped me in any way; and I beg pardon of any whose views I have presumed to understand and criticize, perhaps without cause, on my terms.

IV. FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER II

¹Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations, Professor Thomas Pettigrew, Spring 1964.

²Metropolitan State Hospital, Waltham, Massachusetts.

³While we assert our thesis boldly as an interpretation of our convictions, we also remember the caution of one who needs it less: "Actuality always extends beyond the patterns of ideas into which we want to force it." H. Richard Niebuhr, The Responsible Self (Harper and Row, 1963), p. 67.

CHAPTER III

THE PROBLEM: SIN AS SEPARATION

I. THE THEOLOGICAL REALITY

To speak of sin is to speak in a theological framework. Other disciplines have other words which more or less include the same reality, but they can never include it all. An acknowledgment of sin as sin bears with it at least a tacit acknowledgment of relationship, of sinning against...someone. This means two things. First, there is a someone who, having been sinned against, is a reality to be avoided, ignored or encountered. Second, that someone is more than a person who will sin back and towards whom we can then rationally "justify" ourselves to a degree that will satisfy us. Sin is immutable. We have involved ourselves in it, and there is no erasing it. Further, that reality, that someone whom we recognize as offended is offended because he would not, in our place, have done what we have done. He is righteous. (We are not here offering an argument for the existence of God from a realization of sin--we are saying that one cannot realize sin without this prior realization. Sin is a faith-word.)

To discuss the meaning of sin is to enter into virtually every theological debate ever opened. Thus, for the

sake of sheer expediency, we will look at William Temple's treatment of its meaning.¹ And even limiting ourselves in this way, we encounter difficulty. Because Temple was so vitally concerned with the whole of life and wrote from so many angles on universal human concerns; and because his theology was true to its goal--all of life in relation to God--one could say with some validity that any "topic" requires probing the entire corpus of his writing. Therefore, we will have to require some artificial distinctions and unfortunate omissions. It is the theological circle, in which all that is, is from God; and all that moves, moves towards God.

When we discuss sin, we are dealing with but one of the recognizable aspects of the larger problem, evil. It is the third of Temple's three forms, and in some measure helps account for some manifestations of the first two, error and suffering. What keynotes sin is its volitional nature--it involves choice, our choice, and thereby assumes both responsibility and purpose on our part. It could not occur were we not free, in the radical sense in which Temple affirms that God has given us the ability to resist Him as well as serve Him. It is the unique feature of man--he who deals not only with the present but with the past and future and therefore thinks

in terms of consequences, effects and goals. We are self-conscious, and thus we are capable of sin, which is a living, dynamic, relational reaction, not at all theoretical.

Now, all these terms--choice, purpose, relationship etc. represent aspects of our humanity which are of utmost importance to us as persons. We would not sacrifice them if we could, in order to avoid a state of sin. In this vein Temple exposes one of the basic twists that makes our problem so fundamental. Sin results from the use--one kind of use--of those qualities which define us as humans, as persons. A sinless man would be a dead man--and even he might be the cause of suffering to another and therefore inadvertently participate in evil. But to dwell on the inevitability of sin simply because we exist was quite foreign to Temple, as it involves a subtle attitude of accusation directed towards God for having created us. No, he says, our selfhood is basically neutral, it is the setting for what we do with it; and we are capable of movement in either direction. Without the capacity for sin, we would have no capacities at all. Rather than dwell on the hardness or pathos of this fact, Temple chooses to accept it as a gift of life and move with it in a positive direction. It is the Fortunate Fall,

if such potentiality can indeed be called a fall at all. And Temple's attitude is as true to life as a more pessimistic one might conceivably be. It is an interesting fact that we cull from experience that to which we are attuned, and why sometimes the way to faith is to act in faith.

All hangs, here, on God's sovereignty. He created us, and for this to be a fact for which we accuse Him is the result of sickness on our part, an unwarranted pessimism which is never a valid understanding. What He created, though, was not another like Himself, but a part of that creation which by simple observation turns out to include other parts. Here is where we run aground. Filled with our self-consciousness, freedom, choice and all, we make them the norm for all else. We are no longer a part. We are IT. This is sin. Our self, our choice, determines our actions. We no longer accept ourselves as part, under God, and therefore we destroy the order of creation. We cannot see ourselves for what we are, so of course we cannot see God for who He is. This replacement of self into God's place, without God's power to operate, further enmeshes us in the tangle. We cannot love others as ourselves, for if we are god in our own eyes, others then must be less than we. However large the circle, the center never

has room for more than one. Therefore sin against God and sin against man are the same sin, seen from a different angle. Both are a simultaneous flying in the face of God's purpose for us, expressed directly or through His will in relation to others.

And since each of us has participated in this distortion, we further complicate our state by trying to live by society's demands. How can we satisfy, even do our duty towards, say, a parent who is himself diseased as we are? And on the institutional level this common sickness becomes so complex that "right" and "wrong" cannot be stated beforehand or out of context. The further we try to please others, the further we move from Him who is to be pleased; because we add the pride of the other to our own, become trapped by demands which have no ultimate reality in the ethical hierarchy. We put our accent on the wrong syllable.

Thus Temple saw that effort alone is fruitless. It is our will which is diseased, our volitional state so poisoned that there is no chance of healing it by our own prescription. Our actions are sinful, true--as in the story of the Fall, where Adam had to eat before he knew what he had done. And his will sickened as he stretched out his hand. This is why Temple declares that an evil

idea is far more dangerous than an evil act--the latter is done and ended, while the former is a state of mind procuding a potentially endless train of results. It is the motive power for our actions, thereby the guiding force of our lives, insofar as our actions have any basis in reflection.

Now, Temple makes it quite clear that this will seeks good, not evil, in its own sight. Here is a complex problem, one that resolves with a subtle twist of argument. Temple does not believe that evil is negative good alone or a privation of good alone. He rejects any theory that attempts to minimize its reality. Sin exists, and it is wrong. This does not mean, however, that there are two powers contending for man and that evil has as good a chance as good. No, God is Lord alone, He intends no evil and He is not limited by it. Man's involvement in his peculiar evil, sin, is a different matter, though. As we have seen, it is a possibility because of the goodnes of God's gifts, and man alone has distorted them to produce such a result. And because of the distortion, man by himself cannot see evil for what it is. He pursues it because he thinks, in every case, that it is good he seeks. Good for him--that is the clue. Formally called the doctrine of the 'apparent good', Temple develops it here to

fit his understanding of man. We cannot see sub specie aeternitatis because the will with which we judge is ours, not God's. Psychology explains this phenomenon by reference to mechanisms of rationalization, projection, repression etc., and Temple would undoubtedly agree with the reality they express. All of them describe technically how a man distorts reality; we project, for example, because we assume that our emotions are normative for all. It is the Golden Rule turned on its head! Even 'evil, be thou my good', he notes, implies that in this case evil is indeed my good. Such a phrase sounds extreme indeed, but it is what we tacitly aver whenever we do not ask God to be our good.

Therefore Temple can speak of the 'freedom that is perfect bondage'. When we take freedom to mean autonomy from anything external, God or man, we are 'free' in the paradoxical sense that we are trapped inside ourselves--free of help, free of guidance or the possibility of forgiveness, free of mercy and grace. And that this is indeed bondage we know in our own sinful, self-concerned way, even prior to listening to God's judgment. We call it anxiety. Our freedom, insisted upon, leads us to the bondage of a Sartre's angst. Alone we know the 'fateful freedom', the 'condemnation to be free', be it a 'religious' or a 'secular' awareness. The trouble is, of course, that

such diffused feelings of dread are untherapeutic because they hang in mid-air. Here is how 'apparent good' strikes home. By sinning, and not knowing that we are sinning, or not knowing in what we sin, we wind the cord tighter. We feel guilty, we do not know why, we try to talk it away but it never quite leaves us, so we become rebellious and sin the more.

Now, this all sounds quite mechanical and determined, and Temple insists that sin rests upon choice. True. We do deliberately turn our backs on God in some sense--we see Him as perfect goodness and we proceed to ignore Him. Our sinful acts confuse us and we become lost in them: but they become habitual only because we first chose to ignore God and go our own way. It is perfect bondage--we are so bound by our own imperatives that we no longer see that God can lead us out. Our ability to evaluate has been forfeited by denying our chief value.

II. THE USE (GOOD) OF SIN

All of this sounds quite desperate. The Christian knows that it need not, for the hope lies in God's promises and His working of grace. How this happens will be the concern of a later section. However, at this point we wish to deal with a contribution that may be Temple's most

important in this area, for even a Christian who knows the meaning of grace may be deeply troubled, even resentful, regarding what is called the problem of theodicy. "Why does a good God permit evil?" is its most common form. What Temple does here is to apply what he has said about sin to the question itself and he therefore transforms the very question. The problem of theodicy is man's problem, his invention, not God's. Perhaps this is why we find no answer to it on its own terms in the Bible...for example, the book of Job, where the question and thus the concern is redirected. Basically in posing this problem of theodicy we are asking, "why did _____ have to happen to Me?" It is a sinful question--with our assertive selves back in the center again. Rather, Temple affirms, we must see life as totally within God's purpose. Thus evil is not something over against God, but something which man has produced and God can even use.² So Temple's question turns from that of the existence of evil to its good--its use. The purpose of evil is to turn men towards God. Temple's explanation of the first two forms are not central here; but in brief they are that error leads to new knowledge by its uncertainty, its experimental character and the challenge and adventure it thereby produces; that suffering leads the sufferer out of himself to communion with God, and more important still, brings others to compassion and

unselfish service. But it is with sin that Temple is the most concerned.

A world in which there were no sin would be a bland one, vegetating rather than engaging. But sin itself is always contrary to God's purpose. Thus the good of sin must involve its destruction. This is a process--it is never complete; but the good that comes, comes in the doing and in the keeping of the goal of completeness before our eyes. To some people, the presence of sin prevents their assent to the doctrine of a God of goodness; but, Temple notes, this same fact that can be an obstacle is also our most urgent motive for seeking God.

Sin is therefore a study in opposites. The badness of our badness sets the goodness of God's goodness in high relief. We need to be aroused from our complacency into the frightening sense of sin with which we began in order to see how impotent we really are. For faith is a venture that no one can enter with disinterest. We might object that this sounds too like an argument out of fear--it could be taken that way, but not by Temple. As a matter of fact, to seek salvation in order to save oneself from present unhappiness, fear of hell or any other motive of gain is precisely that attitude which will prevent a man from hearing the word of God, he feels. This is how we

damn ourselves: by complacency, which is selfish; or by fear of consequences, which is more so. No, Temple would feel that the sense of helplessness generated by awareness of sin is first of all true to the facts and therefore healthy; secondly, that what it is meant to arouse is that love of God for God's sake rather than for man's sake. Sin is always against God and is therefore a state of separation. He who gives me meaning, He it is from whom I have turned my back. Perhaps I feel I have not been able to "help" it--I am not God, nor am I meant to be. As Thomas Becket remarks soberly in Murder in the Cathedral, "Human kind cannot bear very much reality."³ Sin, and the sins which earmark it, are entered into by each of us, sometimes more consciously so than others. What is significant is the brokenness we feel, which can only be repaired in relationship. And if God is creator, life-giver, any relationship short of one with Him will contain the potential for that much less life. Others can lead the way, can indeed be sacraments of His being: but we must ultimately become God-oriented, else we cannot come to terms with the special and unique meaning of sin. For without God there is death.

III. SUMMARY

This brings us to a clarification of the ultimate

meaning of sin. If God is life, the plenitude of life, our separation is death in some form. It may be more or less realized, but we live in the knowledge that it will someday be realized fully. What earmarks this state as deathful is our "inertia of motion", as it were. The "dying to self" of which Paul speaks is quite another matter, for it is a turning, an act of volition seeking God that is singularly distinct from the sinful-deathful state of resignation or despair. And that which overcomes sin is faith--the entered relationship. (Faith, as we will see later, is also a state, that too will someday be realized fully.) Both of these words, sin and faith, are theological terms expressing the two extremes of the meaning of God-centered relationship.

IV. FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER III

- ¹I am indebted to all Temple's works listed in the bibliography for his help here. I have not used footnotes throughout the chapter, as I have tried to weave his ideas into the argument naturally.
- ²We might insert here that Temple strongly believes that sin is man's responsibility, that God did not intend it, even though it was 'too probable not to happen', he admits. That it was inevitable was the result of a finite use of God's gifts and in no way makes God the author of evil.
- ³We may not enter here into speculation concerning either "original righteousness" or "original sin"--neither of which, incidentally, seem to me to give proper consideration to human reality or creativity.

CHAPTER IV

GUILT: THE EXPERIENCE OF SEPARATION

I. THE EXISTENTIAL REALITY

In the previous chapter we have examined Temple's theological statement of separation. Now, seen from another angle, we will discuss the situation in terms of guilt. Sin and guilt, in most writing, are virtually interchangeable terms. But for the sake of clarity we will make a distinction between them here.¹

The feeling of guilt is existential. (We will examine below what Buber calls its "ontic character"). Guilt is what we call that feeling in the person which attests that all is not well. It comes from within the person: "I am guilty", not "somebody tells me so". Like sin, guilt is a state; but the state of guilt is a result of a state of sin. That is, if sin is a theologically oriented term, sin can be "objective"--everyone is involved and it is thus universally applicable, whether realized or not, denied or not. Guilt, as we will use the term, is more "subjective"--we can feel guilty without at first knowing we have sinned or in what we have sinned or without connecting the two. Guilt is a state we feel, or experience, where the state of sin is one which exists

whether we feel it or not. This feeling is a kind of knowing; and from an "objective" point of view we might even say that guilt is a knowledge of sin, an awareness that we are separated. (Now, there is a difference between guilt and guilt feelings, and we will look into it--but even here, we affirm that both are, in fact, felt, if there is any awareness at all. But we will keep in mind that feeling guilt and guilt feelings are two different things.) But this "objective" point of view is of no use to us yet--guilt may be indeed a knowledge of sin in some obscure way, but until it is seen for what it is, and faced, it only makes for confusion and anxiety. That is, until the concept of guilt can be made useful, it is destructive. And its use depends on the fact that it is seen for what it is. The expression of sin interiorally is one of guilt--but this is verbiage if it remains theoretical.

And the problem is a complex one indeed. We need to feel guilty if the concept of sin is to be made real to us in our own experience. But there is no simple cause and effect relationship between the two. As we have seen, being in a state of sin puts us off-center, and we see things from a nearsighted or jaundiced angle. Because we are in a state of sin we commit sins, off-center

actions, and we feel guilty because we sense that they are "wrong". But we cannot know, truly, what "wrong" means as long as we are off-center! That is, because we sin we feel guilty. So guilt has a resultant nature. It is easy, then, to see why guilt becomes so dreadfully entangled. The recognition of what we will call true guilt is necessary for forgiveness, but this is truly difficult to achieve. So in this section we will have to consider the two-sided problem of false guilts and false lack of guilt before we can look for the proleptically therapeutic state of the acknowledgment of authentic guilt. That is, we have to know in what we are guilty before we can deal with the guilt we have isolated: and simply having it before us does not solve our problem, it only clarifies it. Then we must take this true, clarified guilt and see what can be done. This is the therapeutic stage--all the previous work is necessary, and by doing the previous work we are well on our way.

When we arrive at what we can call authentic guilt, we will not need to speak of it in detail; for if it is authentic it is then, according to our definition, an existential, experiential awareness of that theological state which we have called sin. It is at this point of mutual authenticity that the two do coalesce and become mutually interchangeable.

II. ADLER AS AN EXAMPLE

Before we look at it from our perspective, however, it would be interesting to return to the work of Alfred Adler. He never uses the word guilt except to attack it as something that others try to ascribe to a person or as a weak reaction, "forms of aggression for the purpose of safeguarding the self-esteem."² His commentator notes, however, that what Adler recognizes are "fruitless guilt feelings...It is not the guilt feelings, however, that bring about distance; rather the defective inclination and preparation of the whole personality find such feelings advantageous for preventing any advance."³ So we have to recognize that for Adler the very word "guilt" is colored by neurotic or useless connotations that prevent him from using it helpfully.

For Adler, everyone has a goal. It is unconscious (for him, that simply means not understood), created by the individual and is the principle that unites the personality structure. This goal expresses itself differently in every living person but it has a rough similarity in all. Adler first called the goal "striving for superiority", later he changed it (in the healthy person) to "striving for perfection". Neurotics still continue to strive for personal superiority, and this, Adler concludes,

puts them on the "useless" side of life. The goal of perfection, on the other hand, includes and is aided by that phenomenon we already discussed which he calls "social interest", and thus the goal of perfection can be "useful", that is, implementing social interest. Adler does not hesitate to admit that man is "inferior"--in fact, it is this feeling of inferiority that prompts him, very early in life, to adopt such a goal. Those who strive for a social goal are oriented in the direction of reality, he feels, for they can partake of the "common sense" that binds men together and are not reduced to creating the private worlds that contend with reality. The three basic areas in life which he indentifies are those of behavior towards others, occupation and love towards the opposite sex. None of these can be fulfilled fruitfully in isolation; thus social interest is necessary. And in involving himself in social interest, man can then deal with the reality which comes to him in these three forms. The more social interest he has, the better he can cope with these areas, and thus the more his feelings of inferiority are reduced. "Social interest is the true and inevitable compensation for all the natural weaknesses of individual human beings."⁴ The goal is static, but the way of achieving the goal (the "style of life")

is dynamic and expresses itself in individual ways. These ways are useful when they are share-able; and the role of therapy is to enter with empathy into the strivings of another to help him to clarify his goal and his style of attaining it.

One can easily see why Adler states, "the main problems of life are problems of human cooperation."⁵ The more one cooperates, is interrelated with others, the less his feelings of inferiority and the more he is on the "useful" side of life. All his problems (for Adler, various ways of feeling inferior) express themselves in efforts to reduce this inferiority by further striving towards either the healthy, useful goal of perfection or the neurotic, useless goal of personal superiority. Thus Adler is able to show some of the dynamics of relationship and why they play the central role that they do.

Now, how does Adler help us understand guilt? We must say two things here before we "translate" him. First, "guilt", like any word, is a symbol, a common handle as it were for expressing a reality. Like any symbol, we have to ask if it is a true and helpful expression of that reality, if it is effective (that is, is the real presence of the reality to be found in the symbol). We find in the word guilt the reality that we have called the consciousness of a broken relationship. Adler obviously does not invest

this symbol with the ability to express the real presence of that reality, so he speaks in other terms, which we will examine shortly. But, secondly, we must be careful in so doing. According to our use, guilt is the existential aspect of the theological reality of sin. This means that what guilt expresses has a twofold meaning that for us can be separated only in theory, but never really. And those two meanings are, in the first place, consciousness of a broken relationship with our fellows, but secondly, the same with God. Thus, we can call guilt an existential term, but for Adler's non-theistic system the word "guilt" has other, and obtrusive connotations. So we cannot say that Adler is "really" talking about guilt--he is not. We are informed by his system, but we are aware that we are adding our own connotations to it.

However, Adler himself provides us with a means of dealing with our twofold reality on his terms. We will speak of guilt towards God as the ultimate reality and guilt towards others as expressions of it, results of it, as it were. Adler speaks of inferiority in relation to the goal, and inferiority along the way to it expressed in actions involving others. And for him, the goal begins in the unconscious, and therapy helps us understand it, clarify it and reach usefully (in cooperation with others) for it. We are not surprised, then, when he has this to

say about God: "Mankind has frequently made attempts to imagine this final goal of human development. The best conception which one has gained so far of this ideal elevation of man is the concept of God. There is no question that the concept of God actually includes this movement as a goal and that it best serves the purpose of a concrete goal of perfection for the obscure desire of man to reach perfection."⁶ So the "god" in his system is the motivating goal.

None of us, Adler affirms, can reach our goal. We know this by feeling inferior. We cannot relate to our goal; we cannot relate to our fellows. So we back off and accept a personal goal in its place. We hear Adler saying that to feel inferior is to experience guilt, if guilt is truly the awareness of broken relationship. In our system, the goal is not our ideal projection, but a person, God, revealed to us in Jesus Christ. When we fail in communion with Him, we are out of kilter with our fellows. This too is experienced as guilt. As a matter of fact, we feel guilt toward our fellows and that leads us to examine why, just as Adler's therapy takes symptoms and looks at them in relation to the goal. Our faith in God as a person is ultimately more hopeful than Adler's system, for we can receive a help that is greater than that which any person can give. Adler's humanism

places an almost intolerable responsibility on the patient and the therapist, and his goal has to remain always unreachable. Thus for him inferiority is a relative problem: we can never be superior to everyone, so it all depends on how we handle our awareness of our relative inferiority. Here we see one of the positive aspects of speaking of true guilt. Where Adler is, finally, abstract and relative, we would say that guilt can be concrete and positive. This makes it harder to accept but at the same time provides a possibility of relief.

III. THE "ONTIC" CHARACTER OF GUILT

So we come to the problem of distinguishing between guilt and guilt feeling. As Buber notes, a person with a guilt feeling "merely relates to himself"⁷, while we must go on to consider the "ontic character of guilt." We need to listen to him; for while we are concerned with the existential experience of guilt, we thereby imply and assume its reality in the realm of being. As such, Buber assures us that it has a relentless quality in the life of the person who has not dealt with it. "From no standpoint is time so perceived as a torrent as from the vision of the self in guilt. Swept along in this torrent, the bearer of guilt is visited by the shudder of identity with himself. I, he comes to know, I, who have become

another, am the same."⁸ Buber is convinced that calling guilt a reaction to taboo is precisely the wrong approach. Rather, "taboo and the placing of taboo have been made possible only through the fact that the leaders of early communities knew and made use of a primal fact of man as man--the fact that man can become guilty and know it."⁹ Thus his definition of "existential guilt--that is, guilt that a person has taken on himself as a person and in a personal situation"¹⁰, cannot be known through psychological categories but lies behind them and results in manifesting them, as his example of "time as a torrent".

We could become far more deeply involved in this level of meaning, but necessity dictates that we move on. Let us simply remember that guilt possesses this "ontic reality" of relationship-breaking (in Buber's words, "when someone injures an order of the human world whose foundations he knows and recognizes as those of his own existence and of all common human existence"¹¹) and that the authentic guilt feeling we search for will be by its authenticity a full realization of this ontic character. And for us this use of the word "guilt" will simultaneously symbolize the twofold reality of a broken relationship with God and with others.

IV. FALSE GUILT

One of the basic problems in dealing with the area of guilt is that only by an act of grace can guilt be "purified". Tournier sums up the problem by saying "a vague, all-inclusive and systematic self-accusation is generally pathological. A concrete feeling of remorse, which relates to a precise act or attitude, is generally genuine. (The patient's) sense of guilt and his inability to pray are merely the projection into the religious sphere of his psychological depression."¹² These people Tournier denotes as "the weak". By this he means psychological weakness, not "natural" or "spiritual" weakness which may be either a hidden strength or a manifestation of a different kind of weakness. Weak reactions he specifies as arising out of fear and inertia. From this beginning, pathological guilt feelings can easily develop, where the burden grows and stifles release.

It is difficult indeed, almost impossible, to isolate false guilt. As Buber sees it, "the authentic guilt feeling is very often inextricably mingled with the problematic, the 'neurotic', the 'groundless'."¹³ And virtually all writers stress the fact that the two, true and false guilt, intermingle in all of us. The reason for this is the fact that true guilt, unresolved, will

fester and infect all around it and spread its contagion to areas originally unaffected. False guilts will develop whenever true guilt is left unattended. Thus what was originally a problem of broken relationship now becomes complicated by "subsequent personality disintegration"... where we find initiated "the vicious circle of guilt--self-punishment--loss of self-esteem--more guilt and further self-punishment."¹⁴ Tournier insists on the necessity of what he calls a differential diagnosis, for "to treat a pathological guilt-feeling as if it were a genuine conviction of sin can only result in making it worse."¹⁵ The best help he can give us in understanding the general nature of this false, pathological guilt is to speak of it as generally unconscious, a "psychological constraint exercised upon the passive subject by his environment", "at the mercy of the psychological automatism of his weak reactions...the anguish is primarily provoked by an unconscious conflict, but a mechanism of rationalization comes into play, and the patient attributes it to--and feels it as--a bad conscience, which he tries vainly to quieten through self-punitive impulsions."¹⁶ This false guilt does not require forgiveness, but needs exoneration through treatment.

In summary of this short exposition, the most helpful single aspect of false guilt in our study (sub specie

relationship) would be the acknowledgment that false guilt is generally an intra-personal reaction. Those aspects of guilt which are false tend to arise when we introject and thus interiorize the original guilt-producing conflict which was inter-personal at its source. False guilt is a kind of compulsion which makes us victims of ourselves; and it can even serve as a protective device whereby we settle for "systematic self-accusation" with no intention (because we perceive no ability) of seeking release. It is, then, a broken relationship so compounded that its victim has lost hope in the ability of relationship to deal with his anxiety.

V. FALSE LACK OF GUILT

Here again we must acknowledge the power of psychological mechanisms with their ability to rationalize and falsely cover what we will examine below as "true" guilt. Tournier speaks of this group in general as "the strong", and he classifies their typical reactions as those of "excitation" (euphoria, self-satisfaction and the like).¹⁷ These active and buoyant responses, on the one hand, mark a personality type, the opposite of the inhibited "weak". But what he notes is more than "natural" strength--these are also modes of coping with disturbing situations. "If we are to be strong we must also simplify life,

shutting our eyes to its disturbing complexity. Thus the strong quickly become the prisoners of a systematizing habit of mind and a simplistic philosophy which ends by drying them up and cutting them off from true life."¹⁸ The "strong" are those who do not feel compelled to dwell on their failures in guilt-producing situations. As Buber's article makes plain, too often he who enters a relationship with such people takes their assurances as literally true and ignores his responsibility to the ontic character of guilt, that true guilt which is a manifestation of sin.

Uninterpreted, spontaneous reactions are never a substitute for what Hymn #437 calls the "peace of God which is no peace." That comes from considered response to reality. "Strong" reactions are as often a means of dealing with a deep anxiety as are the more obvious "weak" ones and basically indicate the same defect of relationship. Refusal to acknowledge guilt is as debilitating to the person as is refusal to seek forgiveness. In considering a case in which her doctor "liberated" a woman from her guilt feelings (all of them, some true, some false), Buber asserts that "with the silencing of the guilt feeling there disappeared for (her) the possibility of reconciliation through a newly won genuine relationship to her environment in which her best qualities could at the same time unfold. The price paid for the annihilation of the

sting was the final annihilation of the chance to become the being that this created person was destined to become through her highest disposition."¹⁹

It is in this area that we take the greatest issue with Adler's method. He sees the need of "restoration" only on an intra-personal level so that inter-personal relationships can continue as before. We affirm that intra-personal resolution is indeed necessary but that, employed alone, it will result in an incapacity to deal realistically in subsequent inter-personal encounters, for values have been exclusively introjected. The "strong" person runs the risk of being a "user" of others.

V. TRUE GUILT

"Guilt feeling is actually a positive, constructive emotion. It is a perception of the difference between what a thing is and what it ought to be."²⁰ May is obviously speaking here of true guilt, for we have seen how enervating false approaches to the reality of guilt can be. And May's definition touches squarely the connection between guilt and sin. False lack of guilt is a fictitious independence, false guilt is a morbid inability to depend; and both of these compound and intensify the initial break in relationship. "Man as we know him existentially is conditioned, finite, imperfect; but he is essentially

connected with God, and this relationship brings in the elements of the unconditioned, the infinite and perfect. In the light of such a tension, it is perfectly understandable that man should experience some guilt feeling at every moment; for it is the manifestation of God's continual impingement upon man's temporal life."²¹

The impulse toward relationship is a move toward the other, where sin results rather in a withdrawal. The acknowledgment of guilt, when it is a part of this impulse toward relationship, includes with it the ability to acknowledge our dependence on the other. "To be in the present is to be in compresence with that is not myself."²² "I experience my guilt not as a relation to a law or to an ideal, but to my companions. And I experience it not as my relation to timeless being but as related to a continuous interaction that has gone on and still goes on."²³ "Responsible action includes both readiness to accept guilt and freedom."²⁴ We are less than the God we seek, and we cannot find Him until we realize how much less we are. But we also cannot find Him until we take our freedom and use it; that is, until we accept our responsibility in the relationship. We cannot do this alone, as we will see in the next chapter; but we do need to wish to be helped. True recognition of guilt looks outside of its own bounds for help. Like Job, we cry "I know that my

redeemer lives" (Job 19:25)--and Job cried thus before he was found. Like Paul, we cry, "Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:24)--and here we see the state of mind that recognizes its guilt and seeks One powerful enough to help. As Bonhoeffer sees it²⁵, we must know that we are under sentence before the rest can happen.

Now, there still remains the problem of what this true guilt is. As would be expected in our context of relationship, such a determination depends on the parties involved, and it is the responsibility of the person, the "strong self" we have spoken of above, to assess his situation and his personal commitments. Such an evaluation will be as different as there are persons to enter it. Here is the area where the burden of the Christian is potentially the greatest of all burdens: "the Church is precisely that community of human beings which has been led by the grace of Christ to the recognition of guilt towards Christ...With this confession the entire guilt of the world falls upon the Church, upon the Christians, and since this guilt is not denied here, but is confessed, there arises the possibility of forgiveness."²⁶ Seen from this angle (and we tread lightly here, for this is certainly no comprehensive understanding of the Passion) Christ brought our guilt into focus in

his death. We abandoned him. In this sense, the law indeed taught us what sin was, but it took Jesus Christ to teach us the depth of our guilt. The law, indeed anything short of God-with-us as a person, could not underline the relational responsibility as he did. But he did more than that. His death was part of a process, leading to greater life. And through the hope inherent in that process, he gave us the power to dare to confess our enormous guilt as part of our process of restoration. "There can be recognition of guilt only because of Christ's grace and because he stretches out his hand to save the one who is falling away."²⁷

VI. SUMMARY

We have examined the existential reality of the concept of guilt, deriving from its ontic character; and we have examined the alternative position of Adler's Individual Psychology for points of intersection. We have seen how false guilt and false lack of guilt express in their own ways the inability to relate and the attempt to compensate, while true guilt acknowledges the dependent state of its possessor and seeks grace-ful rather than purely psychological restoration. True guilt before God dares confess its corporate extent without running the risk of being Tournier's "vague, all inclusive and systematic self-

accusation"²⁸ that he calls pathological.

We have not dealt specifically with the problem of corporate guilt, as it presents problems too complex for us to do justice to within our limitations. We must be content to say that true guilt is, for each person, as inclusive as he has eyes to see, while at the same time oriented specifically enough that it does not overwhelm and debilitate. He who knows his guilt "sees himself as he really is without illusions; but unavailing regret, self-despising and attempts to justify the self are removed."²⁹ True guilt is the acknowledgment of one's state of sin, and its full acknowledgment is possible only within a context that promises release.

VII. FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER IV

- ¹Where quotations occur, we cannot promise that the author's meaning will be identical with our purpose, of course.
- ²Heinz L. Ansbacher and Rowena R. Ansbacher (eds.), The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler (Harper Torchbooks, 1964), p. 126.
- ³Ansbacher's own opinion, p. 273.
- ⁴Ibid., p. 154.
- ⁵Ibid., p. 131
- ⁶Ibid., p. 107.
- ⁷Martin Buber, "Guilt and Guilt Feelings" (The William Alanson White Memorial Lectures, Fourth Series), reprinted from Psychiatry: Journal for the Study of Interpersonal Processes, XX, no. 2 (May, 1957), p. 114.
- ⁸Ibid., p. 116. :
- ⁹Ibid., p. 117.
- ¹⁰Ibid.
- ¹¹Ibid.
- ¹²Paul Tournier (trans. Edwin Hudson), The Strong and the Weak (Westminster Press, 1963), p. 205.
- ¹³Buber, loc. cit.
- ¹⁴Edward A. Tulis and Richard H. Phillips, "The Nature of Confessional Interaction" (unpub.), pp.1,2.
- ¹⁵Tournier, op. cit., p. 221
- ¹⁶Ibid., p. 222.
- ¹⁷Ibid., p. 97.
- ¹⁸Ibid., p. 169.

- ¹⁹Buber, op. cit., p. 118.
- ²⁰Rollo May, The Art of Counselling (Abingdon Press, 1939), p. 70.
- ²¹Ibid., p. 74.
- ²²H. Richard Niebuhr, The Responsible Self (Harper and Row, 1963), p. 94.
- ²³Ibid., p. 95.
- ²⁴Dietrich Bonhoeffer (ed. Eberhard Bethge), Ethics (N.Y.: The MacMillan Co., 1955), p. 209.
- ²⁵Ibid., pp. 45ff.
- ²⁶Ibid., p. 46.
- ²⁷Loc. cit.
- ²⁸Tournier, op. cit., p. 205.
- ²⁹H.H. Farmer, The Servant of the Word (London: Nisbet & Co., Ltd., 1942), p. 83.

CHAPTER V

FORGIVENESS: ACCEPTED AND ENTERED RELATIONSHIP

I. THE THEOLOGICAL PROMISE AND THE EXISTENTIAL REALITY

Forgiveness is that action of God upon man which reunites him, makes him once again partaker of the fullness of God. It exists as a promise before it is ever accomplished; and the promise is what gives us the courage to seek our part in the restoration. We approach the experience of forgiveness sin in hand, as it were. Forgiveness also has a derivative application, in that forgiven ones are freed to forgive others. Let us look at it first from God's side.

Forgiveness is not retribution. The latter was held as a necessity in early religious thought, when it was believed that the price could be paid. Gradually men came to realize, and the coming of Christ made plain, that forgiveness is of God. Only He could accomplish At-one-ment, and He did, in the death and resurrection of His son. There are many interpretations, and many accretions of doctrine surrounding this divine activity, that we simply cannot explore here. We take God's action as a given, with great awe for what is entailed; and we accept it as the basis upon which our broken relationship

can be made new. Temple interprets Christ's action in the light of sacrifice and using his theory which we examined in Chapter Three of the good--the use--of evil; and from the point of view of relationship it is the single most pointed interpretation we might note.

The sin of the world was such that no one could untangle it, as all were caught in the self-centeredness that is the exact opposite of sacrifice. So God sent His son, who accomplished that which we could never do--he loved, totally, and taught us thereby what love is and how his overcomes our lack of it. Here we have a sacrificial act which is not only redemptive in itself but also helps us to assess our sin--for it is the perfect example of sinlessness, and against it we can no longer deceive ourselves, if we are penetrated by the grace it bestows. It is more difficult to confuse the good with the apparent good now that Christ has made the good so apparent. Christ fought sin to the death literally in himself and thereby for each of us. His sacrifice was made necessary by our sin, but by making the sacrifice he overcame the sin. This is the "good" ov evil--good because it was there and made the victory the more triumphant but now is overcome.

It is necessary to keep this action of God in mind through the course of our development. His willingness for relationship, apparent in the very act of creation,

needed no improvement from His side. Yet He extended His reconciling will¹ for our sakes by the person and action of Jesus Christ. Now, as we go on to discover the aspects of forgiveness that touch us, we will tend to examine them experientially; and the "forgiver" will generally be considered as another person, rather than as God directly. There are two reasons for this. First, in the area of forgiveness the direct relationship between a given man and God falls generally into the category of ascetic theology. Extensive and valid as this experience may be, it is not the specific concern of this paper. Second, we wish to see how interpersonal relationships lead to and incorporate the presence of God and can act as a sacrament of His presence. It is what Niebuhr speaks of² when he maintains that every interpersonal act of response includes what he calls a "third reality", which/who is a "referent" or "cause"--to the believer, of course, this "third reality" is God. Tournier speaks strongly here: "There are then two parallel dialogues, two personal contacts--one with another person, the other with God. These two dialogues are closely interconnected, like the two great commandments...So true is this that confession to God by oneself has no liberating quality, and that in prolonged isolation there is no dialogue with God."³ God's prior action makes human action possible; and,

conversely, human action and interaction provides the living context in which God's action can be incorporated.

II. CONTEXT AND INSTRUMENTATION

We know that seeking forgiveness is a difficult, painful task that requires the self-searching and insight we discussed above in the acknowledgment of authentic guilt. It requires more than this; and that "more" is the ineffable presence of that grace which permeates the whole process of re-seeking relationship. "Grace, we may say, is God at work in the world through persons."⁴ Again, God and persons are bound together; and the combination may reveal the grace we speak of.

In a new work, James G. Emerson provides us with a very useful tool for examining the complex problem of forgiveness. He has discovered two dynamic aspects within the experience which he isolates and discusses as component parts of the whole reality. First, he declares that "there is a contextual nature to the experience of forgiveness. The hallmark of this context is freedom."⁵ Second, "a sense of forgiveness also requires an adequate instrumentation of that context."⁶ In the first, the context, a state of forgiveness exists as a potential. As Howe notes, "One cannot really surrender one's pretenses and defenses when he is insecure and vulnerable.

Only when we are secure and have the assurance of acceptance dare we be honest regarding what we are and what we are not."⁷ This is the freedom of which Emerson speaks, a part of the context in which a person dares to be himself. "A person with no faith or trust cannot even enter upon the 'therapeutic contract'."⁸ This freedom is more than acceptance. Acceptance is necessary in order for the process to begin⁹, but it is basically a neutral attitude, simply part of the entire context. What is central is what Emerson calls the "dynamic power of the Holy Spirit which...frees us."¹⁰ The New Testament portrays this context most clearly, for the presence of Jesus Christ among men was the context--dynamic, personal, freeing. With him men could be themselves in the context of him who was greater than they.¹¹ This context needs to be proclaimed, as evidence that forgiveness is present. Finally, he declares that forgiveness comes in a mediated context. This will be the subject of subsequent discussion.

Second, "there must be some instrument that adequately brings to personal awareness the context of freedom."¹² That is, something happens to a man that makes forgiveness real for him in his life. This is the step from promise to process. Emerson isolates three factors pertinent to the instrumentation of forgiveness: "the attitude of the

individual, the act of God, and the symbolization of both in an expressive act."¹³ The first point, the attitude as part of the context, was seen in the previous chapter as the ability to declare true guilt--it depended on the faith that there was more to the process. God's act as a factor in the process is His ability, and His alone, to forgive sin. In this sense, the Cross of Christ was the new and final instrumentation of the fact of forgiveness. And during his life, the New Testament shows Jesus' active instrumentation in his declaration of forgiveness to others. Finally, the symbolic act that expresses forgiveness most clearly, he affirms, is the act of forgiving others. In this he not only avoids the theoretical problems of, but constructively explains the command of Jesus to forgive others if we would be forgiven. Even so sophisticated a theologian as William Temple founders at this point--he says that forgiveness of others is the prerequisite to our own forgiveness; and this, while admirable in theory, immediately presents us with the problem that the unforgiven tend to be unforgiving. We cannot dwell on the chicken-egg, time-line aspects of being forgiven and forgiving. Rather, like Emerson, we see both as part of a dynamic, ongoing process in which we instrument our own forgiveness by providing a context for others.

We will return to Emerson's two terms, for they aid clarification of the aspects of this area admirably.

III. FALSE LACK OF FORGIVENESS

As in our chapter on guilt, we must discuss some of the fallacies and stumbling-block areas before light can be shed on the true nature of the concern. Under this section we will be dealing almost exclusively with the potential forgiver and his problems.

False lack of forgiveness might be equated with the biblical phrase "hard heart". Here we have a lack of receptivity, the exact opposite or relationship. It seems that the basic problem here is that the potential forgiver is not himself forgiven: that is, he has not himself entered the process. Beyond this, we could add that he fails to see himself as but a surrogate, a mediator of God's forgiveness. According to our exposition of the meaning of sin, this is the same problem: he sees himself at the center of the circle and is thus in sin. Our independence is real only in the context of our ultimate dependence upon God.

He who withholds forgiveness damages both himself (by confirming his sinfulness) and the one to be forgiven. By confessing one's sin, Tulis observes, a man re-enacts his crime and adds a new witness. "The

penitent is then faced with another punishing figure and deals with him in the same way as he dealt with the original offended object. The confessor has become a punishing witness and is introjected. This only serves to increase the penitent's anxiety and re-inforce the vicious circle of guilt."¹⁴

Thus, the potential forgiver has a serious responsibility as mediator. It is up to him to confirm the assumption that confession of guilt is indeed part of a larger process. As potential forgiver, he is thereby a potential relationship-restorer.

Finally, there are senses in which the potentially forgiveable man himself exhibits this false lack of forgiveness--in his case, lack of acceptance of forgiveness. They are those who will not "turn again, and live". (BCP, Declaration of Absolution, Daily Offices) This can be, as we have seen, a result of false guilt or lack of it which is a misguided use of "independence" or results "when the affect has been 'split off' (sic.) from the cognitive act."¹⁵ Both Emerson and Hiltner consider the "unpardonable sin" to consist in rejecting the power and strength that comprise the context of forgiveness, the impetus to a new start. Thus the person who does not invest the forgiver with power to forgive has not yet fully desired relationship.

IV. FALSE FORGIVENESS

This error generally results from a try for easy relationships. That is, false forgiveness does not take the situation seriously enough, it brushes the sin and guilt away and declares that all is well. Such "forgiveness" is irresponsible and cannot mediate God's forgiveness.

We find false forgiveness in any system which does not recognize the radical nature of sin and which will not regard a guilt feeling as authentic. Freud's psychoanalysis is a notable example, in which societal taboos ostensibly account for a person's malaise.

We encounter this charge of too easy forgiveness against the Christian affirmation of "free grace" when God's gift is seen outside the context of the Cross. For example, to ask if we might "sin the more, that grace may abound" (Romans 6:1) quantifies the conception of grace in a way that could only come from the outside, by one who had not found by experience that the first impulse of grace is quite limitless and who furthermore was unaware of the investment of God in the giving of grace (see discussion of "light burden" below).

The potentially forgiveable man may also seek forgiveness too lightly by isolating false guilts (those

The Light Burden

The greatest joy, that of being forgiven, is no easy task, as we have attempted to indicate. We see it in Eliot, as Becket speaks:

...acting is suffering
And suffering is action. Neither does the
actor suffer
Nor the patient act. But both are fixed
In an eternal action, an eternal patience
To which all must consent that it may be
willed
And which all must suffer that they may
will it,
That the pattern may subsist, for the pattern
is the action
And the suffering, that the wheel may turn
and still
Be forever still.¹⁷

As Bonhoeffer remarks, "the whole of the past is comprised in the word forgiveness."¹⁸ We remember Buber's example of "time as a torrent"--and the acceptance of forgiveness requires that we replace this kind of memory,

that we allow our self-consciousness to be replaced by the fellowship into which God calls us.

Considering the burdensome aspects of accepting forgiveness, Søren Kierkegaard writes most poignantly. He insists that when Jesus affirms that "my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Mt. 11:30), he indeed speaks of a burden to be borne. Jesus takes away the heaviest burden we can know, that of the consciousness of our sin; but still he replaces it with what is itself a burden. "If any man will not understand that forgiveness too is truly a burden to be borne, albeit a light one, then he is taking forgiveness in vain. Forgiveness is not to be earned, it is not as heavy as that; but neither is it to be taken in vain, it is not that light..."¹⁹ To freely step from the center of the circle and allow God His rightful place is an act of humility which we simply cannot achieve on our own. Our state of being has changed, and this is a dynamic process, transforming our motivations and desires.

Thus, in the process of forgiveness, we take our freedom to Him as a gift and receive it back magnified. Until we are forgiven we are not able to see how cramped that freedom was, all snarled up around us. Loosed by forgiveness, our freedom is bound to God and stretches freely from His hands where we have placed it to touch us

at every point of our being. Then we find that we no longer need to assert it so defensively at every random opportunity we see. True freedom expresses itself in self-control, Temple has noted: that is, it is bound up with purpose and goal. "The law of 'Die and become' is fulfilled in every process of spiritual maturing."²⁰

Endowment

Then, we need to consider the responsibility of the man who is seeking forgiveness. Having acknowledged his authentic guilt, we might assume that his part of the task is finished. This is true insofar as forgiveness itself comes from God. "Our faith is not in ourselves and what we can do, but in God and in what He can do in and through us."²¹ Yet there is one further commitment man must make, and it is a dynamic one. This final step is what we might call "endowment". That is, we still have the ability to withhold the power of forgiveness. We began to look at this aspect under the problems of false lack of forgiveness, when the desire for relationship was truncated at some stage. Here we examine it a bit more positively, assuming that at this stage the person has invested a good deal in the process.

The potential forgiver must have the authority to forgive. We believe that God has this authority, that

priests as his vicars have been invested by the Church with a mediating authority, and that various other situations are pregnant with the possibility of forgiveness. Yet to have this authority by fiat, as it were, and to have the particular person involved himself endow this forgiving figure with authority to forgive him of his particular sin in a particular situation, are often two different matters. A person can earnestly desire that something happen and yet come away unfulfilled. "Only the offended can forgive...and only the offender can allow forgiveness"²²--the offended cannot do both. Aside from bungling by the confessor, we must suspect that the confession did not deal with the guilt, the whole guilt and nothing but the guilt. Or, perhaps, the guilty one chose the wrong area. Roughly, there are three ways we may deal with guilt-laden material: via the law, through the workings of conscience or by taking it to God, directly or indirectly. We may find that one area serves in some cases but not in all: for instance, legal handling of some burdens is inappropriate; and in this case the law is not endowed with the power of forgiveness.

The positive side of this aspect is of course that, all preconditions met, if the potential forgiver is endowed with the power of forgiveness by the guilty person, he can indeed mediate a vital sense of forgiveness. A

priest, for instance, has the tool of absolution by which he assures the penitent that he is forgiven. If this assurance is accepted, forgiveness takes place. But it must be accepted, and this is why we speak of the faithful response as "realized forgiveness". It is at this point that the process becomes a reality.

What Happens to the Past?

Finally, we must examine the new relationship in terms of what has happened to the person and his memories. Again we remember Buber's citing of "time as a torrent", when the guilty person is overwhelmed with the meaning and effects of what he has done; when he has "introjected" the offended object and thereby "disturbed the self-concept."²³ Forgiveness obviously heals this disturbance and brings release--more, it brings new life. What then becomes of the person's past as a remembered part of this new life?

Niebuhr speaks of the "understanding of themselves Christians have had when they looked for newness of life not by way of forgetting the past but by the forgiveness of sin, the remembrance of their guilt and the acceptance of their acceptance by those against whom they had offended."²⁴ When Rogers speaks of insight as "reorganization of the perceptual field...seeing new relationships...

reorientation of the new self"²⁵ he speaks of the same dynamics in another context. We are delivered from our sin by the action of God upon us; but we are never delivered of our past, the ability to remember which is one of the ways we are defined as persons.

Once again Kierkegaard speaks poignantly to our point, and we quote him at length.

He who believes, believes that all is forgotten, only in this wise, that he is bearing a light burden--for is he not bearing the memory that he has been forgiven? The eternal righteousness can forget and will forget only in one way, through forgiveness. Out of forgiveness a new life should spring forth in the believer; therefore the forgiveness is not to be forgotten. Forgiveness through Christ is the gentle chastener that has not in its heart to remind us of what has been forgotten, and yet so far reminds us as to say: Do not forget that it has been forgiven.²⁶

Just right! This is not the morbid clinging to our unworthiness of which we have been freed; rather, it is "not rejection of the past but reinterpretation."²⁷ We remember who we were in the context of forgiveness, that is, of who we are--washed, renewed, blessed. Our new life is profoundly realistic in a way we never knew before. We do not have to cover, rationalize, dissimulate. Because "turning is the recognition of the Centre and the act of turning again to it. In this act of the being the buried relational power of man rises again, the wave that

carries all the sphere of relation swells in living streams to give new life to our world."²⁸ What has happened is a mystery, try as we will to understand it. Relationship has been restored, and we are freed to experience it in ever widening ways.

VI. SUMMARY

In connection with our preceding work, we have now discovered indeed that "true acceptance of forgiveness is always an acknowledgment of something that, in some degree, has already taken place."²⁹ We have also seen that "the event that from the side of the world is called turning is called from God's side redemption."³⁰ That is, forgiveness is a theological term that finds its application in the world of experience and is thus what we term "existentially theological". The result of turning again is life: in accepting forgiveness we become a new creature. Goldbrunner speaks of the traditional "theological virtues" (faith, hope and love) as "our answer to God, but at the same time they are the power and source from which we are able to give this answer. It is in fact our task to bring our natural abilities within the range of these Divine gifts in order that they may all be slowly recast."³¹ This is exactly the expression of

the merging of the theological and the existential of which we have spoken. We see these virtues in our personal lives, in relationship to our fellows and in relationship to God expressed as new strength, new openness and new communion.

We have found, through forgiveness, our right dependence and have been made, so to speak, independent by finding it. Our circle has been reoriented, and we no longer occupy the center. Finally, the meaning of faith is understood because it is being experienced.

Now we will go on, in conclusion, to make a few comments about this life in faith, the "realized forgiveness" that is the life in Christ.

VII. FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER V

- ¹From a Christian point of view, made it a mandate.
- ²H. Richard Niebuhr, The Responsible Self (Harper and Row, 1963), pp. 82-88.
- ³Paul Tournier, The Meaning of Persons (Harper and Row, 1957), p. 160.
- ⁴Joseph P. Fletcher, William Temple: Twentieth-Century Christian (The Seabury Press, 1963), p. 71.
- ⁵James G. Emerson, The Dynamics of Forgiveness (The Westminster Press, 1964), p. 56.
- ⁶Loc. cit.
- ⁷Reuel Howe, Man's Need and God's Action (The Seabury Press, 1953), p. 106.
- ⁸Seward Hiltner, "Psychology and Morality", Princeton Alumni Weekly LXV, no. 1 (September 22, 1964), p. 17.
- ⁹It is a quality demanded of the potential forgiver or mediator of forgiveness.
- ¹⁰Emerson, op. cit., p. 79.
- ¹¹He points out, incidentally, that this contextual nature of forgiveness was well known to the scribes and Pharisees, and that this was their problem with Jesus--"forgiveness could come only in the context of God; how, then, could it come in the context of Jesus?" op. cit., p. 90.
- ¹²Emerson, op. cit., p. 56.
- ¹³Emerson, op. cit., pp. 90,91.
- ¹⁴Edward A. Tulis and Richard H. Phillips, "The Nature of Confessional Interaction" (unpub.), p. 3.
- ¹⁵Tulis, op. cit., p. 6.
- ¹⁶Paul Tournier (trans. John S. Gilmour), The Meaning of Gifts (John Knox Press, 1963), p. 53

- ¹⁷T.S. Eliot, "Murder in the Cathedral", T.S. Eliot: The Complete Poems and Plays 1909-1950 (N.Y.: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1952), p. 182.
- ¹⁸Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Ethics (N.Y.: The MacMillan Co., 1955), p. 79.
- ¹⁹Søren Kierkegaard, The Gospel of Our Sufferings (Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1964), p. 44.
- ²⁰Josef Goldbrunner, Holiness is Wholeness (Pantheon, 1955), p. 53.
- ²¹Howe, op. cit., p. 21.
- ²²Tulis, op. cit., p. 2.
- ²³Ibid., p. 14.
- ²⁴Niebuhr, op. cit., p. 104.
- ²⁵Carl Rogers, Counselling and Psychotherapy. (Houghton Mifflin Co., 1942), p. 206.
- ²⁶Kierkegaard, op. cit., p. 45.
- ²⁷Niebuhr, op. cit., p. 104.
- ²⁸Martin Buber, I and Thou (Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 100.
- ²⁹Hiltner, op. cit., p. 18.
- ³⁰Buber, op. cit., p. 120.
- ³¹Goldbrunner, op. cit., p. 42.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION: FAITH AS 'REALIZED FORGIVENESS'--

THE NEW MAN AND THE GOOD NEWS

I. THE THEOLOGICALLY EXISTENTIAL LIFE

If one thing should have emerged already, it is that as relationship includes all the factors we have discussed, it does so naturally and continuously, without the artificialities that our treatment has necessitated. That is, we do not begin our responsible life in sin, move to an awareness of guilt, seek and find forgiveness and then live happily ever after. As we stated at the beginning, we go from strength to strength with the full awareness that this does not imply perfectionism. The Good News is that we can begin again, and again...and again, "new every morning". We are not lifted from the world of experience in any way. As Goldbrunner puts it, "the problem and the task is how to be wholly worldly and wholly devoted to God."¹ We live, not without problems, but with a context into which they can be seen in perspective. "The secret of life is not mastery but fidelity."²

"The goal of human life is 'the widest possible fellowship', and the way to grow from selfishness into fellowship

is through struggle and suffering."³ It would not be fair to the dynamic character of life to call this experience cyclical, for that would imply a routinizing which too is a stasis of sorts. There is growth involved. "Conformation with the Incarnation is to have the right to be the man one really is."⁴ And to be a man means to grow into fuller and deeper relationships, if our thesis is true to reality. To be free to enter relationships is to be a man; and to in fact enter such relationships is to use one's manhood in a way that will confirm and strengthen it. Rogers defines action as "the spontaneous reinforcement of the new orientation, and a test of the genuineness of the insights attained."⁵ How much more when it is even more than an insight which has been infused!

Further, we have seen that there is no time-line which separates the action of God into categories or determines our response in stages. Bonhoeffer speaks of "Jesus Christ incarnate, crucified and resurrected" and notes that "we cannot separate, for each element comprises the whole."⁶ There is God's grace present in our very ability to sin, for the freedom which permits it is what gives us our capacity to do otherwise; and this admixture of dynamic elements occurs at every phase.

Thus, the significant distinction between, for instance, contemporary existentialism as a "movement" or "philosophy" and what we call the theologically existential life is not the factor of personal responsibility per se, for in this area existentialism has taught us a good deal which we should use in thankful humility. Rather, it is the context into which this responsibility fits, that God-oriented context in which we step out of the center of the circle. There is "no such being as a Christian God; but there is a Christian relation to God."⁷ Within this context, the instrumentation is most emphatically our responsibility. "God is acting in all actions upon you. So respond to all actions as to respond to his action."⁸ Existentialism founders at exactly this point, for its freedom is so radical that it is unable to recognize any values and thus the person is trapped sans context.

II. THE CONTEXTUAL NATURE OF FAITH

Let us make no mistake at this point about the composition of this context. Moral theology can offer us guidelines and practical theology can aid in instrumentation--we are not antinomian. But even more germane is that we are not legalists: both positions skirt the

edges of the context in which we have localized relationship at the core. And the very thesis of the centrality of relationship is dominated by the promise and the presence of God and which on our side demands a present commitment, a responsible present which is compresent, that is, pregnant with past influence and future expectation.

All these factors we would summarize in the one word faith, keeping in mind the definition we accepted in the first section.⁹ Central to this definition would be Tournier's simple assertion, "faith consists only in recognizing who it is who speaks."¹⁰ We hear Him speak, we recognize, therefore we are accountable. "Faith as relationship between man and God is the risk of total active response in total dependence of will to the righteous offer of fullness of life by total independence of Will."¹¹

III. THE CHURCH AS THE FAITH-CONTEXT

The Communion of Saints--Our Privilege.

If we hear Him speak, and hear what is said, there is one inevitable consequence--we unite before Him. This banding together in faith is for Christians the Church, "a section of humanity in which Christ has really taken

form."¹² Here, in the "communion of saints", we are called to live in the perpetual sacrament of seeing God made real. Our relationships are an outward and visible sign of what has happened to us, as our continued reception of the body and blood of Christ are the means by which what has happened continues to happen and which gives us strength for our relationships. Further, we have seen that the Church recognizes the Holy Spirit as God's gift of Himself in our lives as we affect and are affected by others in grace.

If such a brief definition of the Church sounds idealistic, it is so only for the sake of emphasis and to indicate what it may be. Certainly within the Christian community its members need the same keen awareness of sin, acceptance of guilt, courage to seek forgiveness and sensitivity to allow God to indeed forgive that is apparent on any other level. The Church bears the light burden for all times. Only by being sentenced can the Church, like any person, be awakened to the new life that is the new man with his Good News. And only by the continual experiencing of the process can the Church offer the continual reaffirmation that it can happen.

Mission--Our Responsibility.

The Church, as the supreme opportunity for relationship, has the supreme task of giving the much that is expected from that body that has received so much, the visit of God Incarnate in His son. The Church has the potential of being that body of persons who are the body of Christ who live in the process we have been exploring. We might call this the life of realized forgiveness. And this life presents a further and correlative mandate.

"God accepts us and creates us into a reconciling fellowship for the express purpose of providing acceptance for the unacceptable."¹³ The Church accepts the mandate, "Go and do likewise" (Luke 10:37). This action is "continued throughout the ages in the sphere of redeemed personal relationships (which is the true Church) now focusing on me, confronting me, as a person indissolubly bound up with other persons at this present time."¹⁴

Those who have been given the gift of faith, the context of relationship, will desire to extend it. If indeed fellowship is gift and goal, we would not exclude anyone. And this will involve us in spreading the Good News, for the new man is, by definition, a messenger.

As we go to do likewise, we do well to utilize every gift which man has developed, in every field he has explored and to seek new and more inclusive areas in which

to implement any action we take. As we do so we act in faith, and we remember too that our faith is an instrumentation of that infinite context which God provides by His faith in us.

IV. SUMMARY

The theologically existential life is the life of faith and in faith. And faith is fullness of relationship. We are not capable of showing forth this faith, that is, of instrumenting it, at all times, because we are not yet perfected. "Realized forgiveness" is a proleptic affirmation. But it is also a reality as often as we allow ourselves to be moved by Him who has, here and now, inaugurated the process by providing the context.

We live in a state that makes realistic concessions for our falling away and thus gives us the freedom and the possibility to "turn again...and live". "That they may all be one, as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may be one in us." (John 17:21) Even so come, Lord Jesus.

V. FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER VI

- ¹Josef Goldbrunner, Holiness is Wholeness (Pantheon, 1955), p. 63.
- ²J.H. Oldham, Real Life is Meeting (Greenwich: The Seabury Press, 1953), p. 39.
- ³Joseph P. Fletcher, William Temple: Twentieth-Century Christian (Greenwich: The Seabury Press, 1963), p. 82.
- ⁴Dietrich Bonhoeffer (ed. Eberhard Bethge), Ethics (N.Y.: The MacMillan Co., 1955), p. 19.
- ⁵Carl Rogers, Counselling and Psychotherapy (Houghton Mifflin Co., 1942), p. 211.
- ⁶Bonhoeffer, op. cit., p. 89.
- ⁷H. Richard Niebuhr, The Responsible Self (Harper and Row, 1963), p. 45.
- ⁸Op. cit., p. 126.
- ⁹While we assert our thesis boldly as an interpretation of our convictions, we also remember the caution of Niebuhr: "Actuality always extends beyond the patterns of ideas into which we want to force it." op. cit., p. 67.
- ¹⁰Paul Tournier (trans. Edwin Hudson), The Meaning of Persons (Harper and Row, 1957), p. 161.
- ¹¹D. Peter Burrows, "The Relationship in Faith: a Functional Theology" (unpub. senior thesis, Episcopal Theological School, Spring 1965), p. 6.
- ¹²Bonhoeffer, op. cit., p. 21.
- ¹³Reuel Howe, Man's Need and God's Action (Greenwich: The Seabury Press, 1953), p. 107.
- ¹⁴H.H. Farmer, The Servant of the Word (London: Nisbet & Co., Ltd., 1942), p. 27.

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